

## Adolescence

Adolescence is the period of transition between childhood and adulthood. It includes some big changes to the body, and to the way a young person relates to the world.

The many physical, sexual, cognitive, social, and emotional changes that happen during this time can bring anticipation and anxiety for both children and their families.

In many societies, however, adolescence is narrowly equated with puberty and the cycle of physical changes culminating in reproductive maturity.

During adolescence, issues of emotional (if not physical) separation from parents arise. While this sense of separation is a necessary step in the establishment of personal values, the transition to self-sufficiency forces an array of adjustments upon many adolescents. Furthermore, teenagers seldom have clear roles of their own in society but instead occupy an ambiguous period between childhood and adulthood. These issues most often define adolescence in Western cultures, and the response to them partly determines the nature of an individual's adult years.

Also during adolescence, the individual experiences an upsurge of sexual feelings following the latent sexuality of childhood. It is during adolescence that the individual learns to control and direct sexual urges.

There are three main physical changes that come with adolescence:

- The growth spurt (an early sign of maturation);
- Primary sex characteristics (changes in the organs directly related to reproduction);
- Secondary sex characteristics (bodily signs of sexual maturity that do not directly involve reproductive organs)

Adolescent thinking is on a higher level than that of children. Children are only able to think logically about the here and now. Adolescents are also developing socially and emotionally during this time. The most important task of adolescence is the search for identity. (This is often a lifelong voyage, launched in adolescence.) Along with the search for identity comes the struggle for independence.

### **Resources:**

*Helping your child through Early Adolescence*

*Changes in adolescence and puberty checklist*

The stages of adolescence

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/teen/Pages/Stages-of-Adolescence.aspx>

Puberty: Helping pre-teens and teenagers handle the changes

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/development/puberty-sexual-development/puberty-helping-your-child>